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BARTON AND THE LINEAGE OF
LINCOLN ✓

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Claim that Lincoln Was Related
to Lee Refuted

—
SECOND EDITION
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By Lyon Gardiner Tyler
Holdcroft, Va.

BARTON AND THE LINEAGE OF LINCOLN

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THE VALUE OF GENEALOGY

Ancestry is only of public interest as it reflects credit upon descendants, and it is merely stating the simple truth that up to the time when Rev. William E. Barton published his book called "The Lineage of Lincoln," no one ever found anything of real interest in any of the lines of Lincoln's genealogy, maternal or paternal. As far as known, or as far as the most luxuriant fancy suggested, Lincoln's forbears were uneducated, shiftless and tiresome people. They conferred no honor whatever on Lincoln or on anybody else.

Mr. Barton seemed to be acquiescent in this opinion, and so his enthusiasm was great, when, in a magazine known as *Good Housekeeping*, and later in his book, *The Lineage of Lincoln*, he thought himself able to announce to a startled world that Lincoln was a Lee! In a very distant cousinship to the peerless Confederate leader, Robert E. Lee, was to be found Lincoln's ancestral glory, maugre all the insignificance and immorality that lay between.

OLD THEORIES UPSET

In arriving at this announcement, Mr. Barton confesses the necessity which he has been under of upsetting the theories of Mrs. Hitchcock, Mr. Lea, Mr. Hutchinson and Miss Tarbell, biographers who have dealt with the mazes of Lincoln's mother's pedigree. I use "mazes" advisedly, for Mr. Barton employs the following language: "Tracing Lincoln's line in America has not been without its difficulties, but these are trivial compared with what one undertakes who would trace the Hanks pedigree." Notwithstanding, it is almost amusing to note the cocksureness with which, in a matter of admittedly so much difficulty, Mr. Barton proclaims the mistakes

of others and the infallibility of his own deductions. How is this accomplished?

THE HANKS ANCESTORS

The books in the Land Office at Richmond, Virginia, show that a Thomas Hanks obtained several grants of land at the headwaters of the Poropotank creek in Gloucester and New Kent Counties in the period from 1663 to 1667, and a grant in 1674 shows that Thomas Hanks had his residence in that quarter. And here is where Mr. Barton's reckless assumptions commence. In two of these grants as recorded in the Land Office the designated land of Thomas Hanks is described as "lying on Col. Lee's land." Mr. Barton assumes that Thomas Hanks and Col. Richard Lee were neighbors and propinquity is an important element in matrimonial affairs, but unfortunately the patents only show that Col. Lee had land in Thomas Hanks' region, which is not surprising, as he had tracts of land in many other places in Virginia as well. Instead of being a neighbor of Thomas Hanks, he was residing, since 1651, on Dividing Creek, a hundred miles away, in far-off Northumberland County, on the south side of the Potomac River.

There is no will preserved of Thomas Hanks, nothing to show who his children were, if he had any, and it is entirely gratuitous for Mr. Barton to say that "apparently the only surviving son of Thomas Hanks was William Hanks of Richmond County," on the north side of the Rappahannock River.

Here is his argument, and such an argument!

"Thomas Hanks was alive and buying land in 1674. William Hanks was married, and had a son, and was living across the river early in 1679. * * * He was not an immigrant and he was not a new resident in the Rappahannock region."

There is nothing that satisfies a real genealogist in all this. Thomas Hanks' residence was miles away from Richmond County, and the Rappahannock River was a great barrier. No one acquainted with the records of Virginia could venture to say that William Hanks might not have been an im-

migrant. It is too well known that many grants, owing to the carelessness of the clerks, were not put upon record, and many perished in one or more of the fires that consumed the office of the Secretary of State, in which they were kept. The county records of Gloucester County, which would have told the history of Thomas Hanks, have all been lost or destroyed. From the existing records in Virginia no complete list of the immigrants to Virginia could be made.

THE HANKSES OF RICHMOND COUNTY

Mr. Barton's record of the Hankses in Richmond County, being the work of E. Carter Delano, deputy clerk of that county, is accurately told. There was a William Hanks, Sr., of Richmond County, who had a son John Hanks, who had a son Joseph Hanks, born December 20, 1725. So far so good, but the rub comes when Mr. Barton converts this Joseph Hanks of Richmond County into Joseph Hanks of Hampshire County, (West) Virginia, Mr. Barton tells us how he does it: "I began at the Bureau of the United States Census and made up a WHO'S WHO of the Hankses as they were in 1782 to 1790. I made a list of all the Hankses in the thirteen colonies. And I found Joseph Hanks with a family of eleven persons, all white, in Hampshire County, Virginia, in 1782."

This is all the proof of identity that I can find in Mr. Barton's book, and it is singularly improvident. It is not known how many children Joseph Hanks of Richmond County had, and it is an extravagant thing for Mr. Barton to say that he made a list of all the Hankses of the thirteen colonies from 1782 to 1790. It is an impossibility.

In the first place, there is no Virginia census at the Bureau of the United States for 1790. It was wholly destroyed when the British burned Washington during the War of 1812, and the census for 1800 was destroyed at the same time. The loss has been keenly felt, and the Bureau has made every effort to supply it by taking the State lists made in the years 1782, 1783, 1784 and 1785, and the tax lists of Greenbrier County from 1783 to 1786, but

the result as published has been far from satisfactory. Mr. North, the Director of the Bureau, in his published work*, declares: "The counties for which the names of the heads of families are returned in the State Census lists are 39 in number, and contained in 1790 a population of 370,000; 41 counties with 377,000 population are lacking."

A pronouncement, therefore, made by Mr. Barton on the strength of the names of less than half the people of Virginia must be far from convincing.

Was Joseph Hanks of Hampshire County, (West) Virginia, the same as Joseph Hanks of Anderson County, Kentucky?

Hardly less satisfactory is Mr. Barton's next step into the dismal darkness of the Hanks pedigree. Joseph Hanks, of Hampshire County, Virginia, is said to be the same man as Joseph Hanks, of Nelson County, Kentucky. It may be that it is so, but Mr. Barton gives no proof except to say that they had the same number of persons in their families.

Thus down to this point, instead of a chain of perfectly proved facts linked solidly together, Mr. Barton's Hanks pedigree is at best a loosely constructed line of very doubtful probabilities. I am sorry to say that it looks too much like an imposition upon the public.

KENTUCKY HANKSES

Perhaps Mr. Barton gets on more solid ground when he discusses the matter of the Kentucky Hankses. Joseph Hanks, of Nelson County, Kentucky, left five sons and four daughters, among whom morality was at a low ebb. One of the daughters, Lucy Hanks, was by an unknown Virginia planter, the mother of Nancy Hanks, Lincoln's mother, and another daughter, Nancy Hanks, was the mother of Lincoln's illegitimate second cousin, Dennis Hanks, by Charles Friend.

*Hheads of Families, First Census of the United States, 1790.

WAS LINCOLN A RELATIVE OF GENERAL LEE?

We will now take up the claim advanced by Mr. Barton that Lincoln was a relative of General Lee. This is broadly assumed merely on the ground that Joseph Hanks of Richmond County married an Anne Lee, daughter of a William Lee. The insufficiency of the proof that Joseph Hanks of Richmond County and Joseph Hanks of (West) Virginia were the same has been noted. That Joseph Hanks of Richmond County was the same as Joseph Hanks of Nelson County, Kentucky, is still more improbable. That the two had wives named Anne or Nancy is of itself of no value. Mr. Barton himself admits the weakness of any such evidence by saying (*Lineage of Lincoln*, page 194): "The difficulty is not in finding another Nancy Hanks, but in finding few enough of them. * * * In almost any group of a half dozen Hanks girls there was likely to be a Nancy." Anne or Nancy was a very popular name in Colonial days, and its use was not confined to the Hanks family. And the same may be said of such names as William, Charles, Richard and John, which were not individually or collectively the property of General Lee's family, as intimated by Mr. Barton.

Any, even slightly intelligent, consideration of the facts is fatal to Mr. Barton's claims. In the first place, family lines were strictly drawn in the Seventeenth Century, and a glance at the records produced by Mr. Barton shows that his Hankses, Lees and Taylors were entirely outside the pale of the "First Families," and any marriages such as he suggests are wholly unthinkable. His families were very poor people, the circle of whose lives never touched the circle of the lives of General Lee's ancestors, who filled the highest offices in the Colony of Virginia.

In the next place, his data about the Lees who married with the Hankses is utterly inconsistent with the known facts regarding the immigrant ancestor of General Lee, Colonel Richard Lee and his family. According to the data provided by Mr. Barton, Anne Lee, wife of Joseph Hanks, was a

daughter of a William Lee. This William Lee, born May 14, 1704, and dying in 1764, in Richmond County, was a son of another William Lee and Dorothy Taylor, daughter of Elizabeth Taylor.

CARELESSNESS OF MR. BARTON

And now as to this last William Lee, Mr. Barton boldly claims that through him Abraham Lincoln was a "lineal descendant of this famous family of Lee"; that William Lee was "unmistakably of the stock of Colonel Richard Lee," and in a pedigree on page 209 of his book he boldly claims him as the son of a son of Colonel Richard Lee, but gives absolutely nothing but the wildest conjecture to sustain his view. In making such a statement one would expect some degree of accuracy, but notice the contradiction in which Mr. Barton involves himself in attempting to give a list of the children of Colonel Richard Lee: "Colonel Richard Lee and his wife Anna had seven sons and two daughters. A daughter and five of the sons are named in this order in his will—John, Richard, Francis, Hancock, Betsy, Anne and Charles." How comes it that he speaks of "a daughter," and yet gives two in almost the same breath, Betsy and Anne, and how comes it that he omits son William named in the will? As a matter of fact, Richard Lee mentions in his will six sons and two daughters, whom the family historian, Edmund Jennings Lee, in his great work, *Lee of Virginia*, lists in the following order: John, Richard, Francis, William, Hancock, Betsy, Anne and Charles. Hancock was the fifth son in order, but on his tombstone he is called "seventh son," which would indicate that Colonel Richard Lee had ten children in all, of whom two died issueless before the making of the will.*

It should be conclusive of the absurdity of the Rev. Mr. Barton's claim of a descent of Abraham Lincoln from Colonel Richard Lee that not one of

*Tombstone inscriptions are not the best evidence, for they are often erected many years after death. I have met with several erroneous inscriptions. On this very tombstone of Hancock Lee his death is stated as occurring in the year 1729, when the court record shows that it occurred in 1709.

the surviving sons of Colonel Lee had a son William who left male issue.

NUMEROUS LEES IN VIRGINIA

The name Lee is so common in the Virginia records that any careful writer would hesitate to be too positive about any particular person of the name. Even before Colonel Richard Lee came to Northumberland County, Hugh Lee and his family were residents there, and at an early date a family of Lees lived in Middlesex County close by, and another Lee family lived in Gloucester County, where Thomas Hanks formerly lived. These last Lees, being poor and undistinguished, present a much better conformity to the conditions of Mr. Barton's search than the Lees of General Lee's ancestry. In the register of Abingdon Parish, Gloucester County, is the following entry: "William, the son of William and Anne Lee, was born June 23, 1683."

How nicely this fits in with the Richmond County Lees. William, the son, would have been about twenty-one years old in 1704, when William Lee of Richmond County, the son of William Lee and Dorothy Taylor, was born. Then how natural it would be to find the woman who married Joseph Hanks of Richmond County, bearing the same name as the wife of William Lee (of Gloucester County), Anne or Nancy, who would in the assumed case be her great-grandmother. And then when we find in the records of the adjoining county of Middlesex a William Lee, servant of Colonel Cuthbert Potter, as freed in 1674 from his indentures, the status of the man, so unlike that of the great Lee family, might suggest that he is the very man Dr. Barton should look upon as the ancestor of Abraham Lincoln—a servant rather than a grandee!

If this is the correct solution of Mr. Barton's problem, William Lee (the father), of Gloucester, would have been a contemporary of Colonel Richard Lee's son, Captain William Lee, who was born in 1651. He could not have been the same as Captain William Lee, for the Captain left no sons (*Lee of Virginia*, p. 72).

FIRST FAMILIES OF VIRGINIA

The bold attempt of Mr. Barton to place his Elizabeth Taylor in the same category of "First Families," as the Tayloes (formerly Taylors) of "Mount Airy," the grand old mansion still standing upon the banks of the Rappahannock, is even more ridiculous than his attempt regarding the Lees. Taylor is an even more common name than Lee, and it would not be going too far to say that the name is found in every county in Virginia.

MAYFLOWER AND SPEEDWELL

The aptness of Mr. Barton to grasp at straws with a view to produce a sensational effect is conspicuously shown in page 202 of his *Lineage of Lincoln* in his reference to the *Mayflower* and *Speedwell*. Because two vessels of these names were found by him in the waters of the Northern Neck of Virginia, the one in 1659 and the other as late as 1684, he affirms their identity with the vessels concerned in the Non-Conformist Emigration to New England in 1620. He calls his find "an amazing discovery now published for the first time."

In all this he is mistaken. Years before Mr. Barton ever engaged in writing his book, the author of this paper had discovered these vessels and published a reference to the *Mayflower* in his magazine, the "William and Mary College Quarterly," Volume XV, page 190. He did not regard the discovery as "an amazing one," for the very good reason that he did not believe that the vessels mentioned in the Westmoreland County records could be the same as the two old leaky vessels of 1620 of the same names, which had doubtless long been scrapped and broken to pieces. He had read, moreover, that there were several vessels of those names. This belief is confirmed by Charles Edward Banks of Boston, Massachusetts, who in his book, *The English Ancestry and Home of the Pilgrim Fathers*, marked by the greatest possible research, fairness and truth in its compilation, says that "The Port Books of England in the reign of James the First show that there were

twenty-six vessels bearing the name of the Pilgrim ship (*Mayflower*)!"

LEE AND LINCOLN

What more is to be said? The fallacies of Mr. Barton's conclusions attaches to his comparison of Lee and Lincoln. It is certainly true, as Mr. Barton says, that both were men of "ability," but while there were few men, if any, equal to Lee in his chosen line as a soldier, there were plenty of men in our history superior to Lincoln as a Statesman. He does not bear any comparison with Webster, Clay or Calhoun, and any critical examination of his administration shows that it was distinguished more for its mistakes than its successes. He had no constructive policy and danced from one expedient to another throughout the war. His refusal to allow McClellan to attack Richmond when Lee had marched north to attack Pope doubtless put back peace two years. He continually interfered with his generals, and the dreadful massacre of Burnside's troops at Fredericksburg is ascribed to his orders to that unfortunate officer who was visited by Lincoln in his encampment shortly before the battle. He signed important papers without reading them and was extremely unmethodical in all his ways and actions. He made wretched appointments and was too lazy to investigate and correct the corruptions in the departments, which were appalling.

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LINCOLN'S BUNGLING

At the commencement of his administration he had an opportunity to prove his statesmanship by preventing war, but after a month's vacillation he called in Force to the settlement of questions—the resort of the savage. The North, having the superior power, won the war, as it should have done under any president, but how near Lincoln came by his bungling to losing the war is shown by his saying that "without the aid of the negro troops [taken from the South's own population] he would have had to abandon the war in three weeks."

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Towards the close of the war he became so discredited with the Northern people that he did what no other presidential candidate ever did—confess that he had no chance of election; and it was only the victories of Sherman and Sheridan that reinstated him in the good opinion of his people, and procured him a re-election.

General Lee showed that he was what Mr. Barton claims for both—"magnanimous, void of hate, and a friend to a reunited country." Lincoln died too soon to permit any real judgment to be formed of how he would have acted to a conquered South. But his previous conduct affords no encouragement. There was certainly no "magnanimity" in his Amnesty proclamation of December 8, 1863, when, under threats of confiscation and punishment and, unlike the British General Howe, in his proclamation of November 30, 1776, he excepted from its benefits everybody of any acknowledged intelligence in the South. There was certainly no humanity in his making medicines contraband of war, or in his refusal to permit exchanges of prisoners, as a consequence of which thousands of poor fellows on both sides died of disease and insufficient nourishment. There was certainly no love of the South exhibited by him when he declared, ten days before the issuance of his Emancipation Proclamation, to a committee of clergymen from Chicago, that "the possible consequences of insurrection and massacre in the Southern States" would not deter him from the use of the emancipation policy, whenever he became convinced of its advisability as a war measure. That massacre did not occur was certainly not due in any way to the humanity of Lincoln.

CONTRASTS

I do not wish to interfere with Mr. Barton's admiration of Lincoln. But the contrasts between Lee and Lincoln are too great for me to join with him. Lee was the soul of honor, and Lincoln was a politician who bargained away the public offices for votes in Congress (see Dana's *Recollections of the War*, pp. 175-178). Lee was a man who re-

sponded to what he considered the call of duty, no matter what the danger, and Lincoln was a slacker who forced other people's sons into the army and kept his own son out of it. His letter to poor Mrs. Bixby of November 21, 1864, appears a positive mockery after reading his letter to General Grant of January 19, 1865, about keeping his son out of the ranks. Lee was a gentleman, whose language was refined and above reproach, and Lincoln was a man whose indulgence in gross jokes and unprintable stories was "restrained by no presence and no occasion." I cannot therefore agree with Mr. Barton that "both North and South should be proud to know that these two men were kinsmen." It is after all not a question of North and South, but one of history and fact, without regard to forgotten feelings and prejudices now sixty years old. Fundamentally, it is merely a question of truth, and judged by that test, no men could have been more unlike than Lincoln and Lee.

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LYON G. TYLER

Holdcroft, Charles City County, Va.

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